

Unending Dialogue Between the Past and the Present in Medicine

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Introduction

- Basic question one may ask
- Why study the history of medicine?
- What's the use of studying it?
- Naive sounding question but important inquiry
- Raised by many colleagues in medical profession: understandable

- Some arguments from the perspective of main actors in medicine

History of Medicine

- Has been studied since a long time ago
- Started by scholars both in History and Medicine field
- Branch of Medicine as well as History discipline
- Different perspective and interest
- Different purpose and objective
- Interdisciplinary subject
- Not so popular among medical profession

Evolution of the Concept of Medicine

- Focus on organs
- The human body as a whole entity
- Physical, mental and social: holistic approach including his background and environment
- Contribution of other disciplines into Medicine: multidisciplinary
- Social sciences and humanities

Health and Development

- ◉ Health is basic need
- ◉ Health is part of human rights
- ◉ Stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948)
- ◉ Basic capital for development (WHO, 2002)
- ◉ Social order and justice
- ◉ Productivity, economic development

Health and Development: The Case of Indonesia

- Still struggling to improve the health condition of our people
- Unfavourable health indicators
- One of the worst in Southeast Asia
- Unacceptable high maternal and child mortality
- High incidence and prevalence of preventable communicable diseases
- MDGs and other international commitments

History of Public Health in Indonesia

- Since the colonial period in mid 19th century
- Known as “People’s Health” or Volksgezondheids
- Improving the health of the people, mainly due to economic reason
- Epidemics of communicable diseases, affecting rural farmers
- Control of small pox, dysentery, typhoid, malaria, plagues, leprosy, yaws, TB, hookworms etc. in many parts of the country

Training of Medical Doctors

- ◉ Indigenous medical doctor or dokterdjawa training started in 1851
- ◉ Gradually upgraded until full qualified medical doctor
- ◉ Paid by and worked for the government
- ◉ Distribution of doctors in the villages
- ◉ Mainly conducting public health programs

Public Health Program During Colonial Period

- ◉ Health propaganda
- ◉ Control of communicable diseases
- ◉ Vector and rodent control
- ◉ Sanitation and hygiene
- ◉ Maternal and Child Health
- ◉ School Health program
- ◉ Nutrition
- ◉ Etc., lots of experience accumulated and many lessons learnt

Public Health After Independence

- ◉ Disruption throughout almost all of the 1940s
- ◉ Second World War and Independence war from the end of 1941 until the end of 1949
- ◉ Most of the established health system and infrastructure collapsed
- ◉ Newly independent country struggling to revitalize its health program in 1950s
- ◉ Shortage of manpower, infrastructure and facilities

Public Health After Independence

- ◉ Program had to be reinvented due to the disruptions of the 1940s and early 1950s
- ◉ Loss of many documents and reports
- ◉ New health administrators
- ◉ Break of knowledge and experience
- ◉ Including in medical education system
- ◉ Sought support from international aids
- ◉ “Amnesia” of the past

History of Medicine: Bridging the Past and the Present

- Avoiding reinventing the medical system wheel
- Avoiding “trial and error” approach
- Avoiding waste of time and energy
- Reflect and learn from the past
- Build and improve from past experiences
- Bridging the past and the present

- The importance of the history of medicine!

One Good Example

- Training of midwives to improve maternal health in the past
- The same period as the training of dokterdjawa
- Had to be closed in 1875 due to social-cultural aspects
- Crash program training of village midwives in late 1980s to lower maternal and neonatal mortality
- Not so succesful as predicted

Conclusion

- Public Health program should be continuously build and improved based on past experiences
- Avoid waste of time and energy to reinvent the medical system wheel, including medical education
- Unending dialogue between the past and the present in medicine is a must!

THANK YOU